

Jan 29 Post #1/5

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← Lara St John

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Jan 29 · 📍

More Men Misbehaving in Music

In recent news, it has been reported in multiple places that Jonathan Carney, longtime concertmaster of the Baltimore Symphony, will be stepping down. "Retiring" if you will.

But I read this in the Baltimore Banner: "The BSO did not give a reason why Carney was leaving. As recently as November, BSO attorney and board member Stephen Shawe defended the rockier moments of Carney's long tenure and gave no indication the concertmaster would be stepping down. "Believe me, he is not a choir boy," Shawe said late last year. "He's been talked to."

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From what I understand, Stephen Shawe is an 85-year-old lawyer who represents the BSO in any EEOC charge and also sits on the "Executive Committee" of the board. A glaring conflict of interest.

It is appalling to me that this Carney concertmaster is now allowed to retire with heaps of laurels, while a lot of women have been harassed and abused over a period of decades by this guy. It's well-known that he asked many women in the orchestra for sex. Katherine Needleman famously said no 20 years ago, and he has treated her very badly ever since.

At that time (in 2005) he apparently had a wife and kids so he lied. When he ended his marriage, he finally admitted to propositioning Katherine. Meanwhile, it seems that some string sub positions were reserved for only those who would sleep with him. One woman was astonished at the lewd comments he made about her breasts when she was a student, and another had to get a restraining order against him. Another

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restraining order against him. Another became his mistress, then second wife, and he broke down any sort of audition requirements so that she could play in the orchestra without needing to audition. I read recently that at least two orchestra personnel managers were upset about such flagrant nepotism.

"Being talked to" by an 85-year-old rich white man was likely a punch in the arm and a jocular wink: "Don't piss off those woke folks too much more, hey? You do what you want but just keep all those women quiet – and we'll protect you."

Also, he lied outright to the Baltimore Sun, a newspaper that does not seem to be interested in factual reporting. The EEOC in no way ruled in favour of the orchestra, as Mr. Carney is quoted as saying.

Furthermore, for all those bros out there who insist that only white men can bring quality to classical music, and that's why only white men have positions of power, let me tell you something. I have a lot of friends and my ear

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something. I have a lot of friends and my ear to the ground. I have been sent bootlegs (by disbelieving acquaintances) of Mr. Carney playing recent concerti. He was literally unable to perform Vivaldi's Winter, and his rendition of the Bruch concerto was mediocre student level, at best. I was agog.


These recordings are not something I am able to share here, because I don't feel like getting sued, but I'm very confident - as someone who has played both concertos easily over 100 times - that I can comment intelligently on what I heard.

Dude sucks at violin.

So, why is he getting to "retire" and being fêted with a "laureate" position? He's been responsible for women quitting music or having a terrible time in their profession – over decades. Everyone knows he's a liar and a predator. To top it all off, he simply can't play his instrument.

← Lara St John

And now he's getting rewarded for it. Someone needs to answer me as to why.



👍👎 Kurt Muroki and 421 others

👍 422 🔍 65 🔄 ➦ 39

Letter #1/5

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← Laurie Sokoloff



Lara St John

Here is a letter I sent a week ago to the [Baltimore Symphony Orchestra](#). At the time I did not know of [Laurie Sokoloff's](#) letter to them.
I have received no reply.

February 19, 2025

Mr. Mark C. Hanson
President & CEO
Baltimore Symphony Orchestra
1212 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Mr. Hanson:

I write to express my profound disappointment that the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra is permitting concertmaster Jonathan Carney to retire with honors from the orchestra, given his longstanding reputation as a sexual predator who is known for actively fostering a toxic working environment.

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← Laurie Sokoloff



It has been reported both publicly and privately, including by musicians known to me personally, that Mr. Carney has solicited numerous women in the orchestra for sex. It is well known that oboist Katherine Needleman rejected his advances 20 years ago and that he has made her working life unnecessarily difficult since that time. When the matter was investigated in 2005, Mr. Carney initially lied about his actions to investigators, ultimately admitting to propositioning Needleman only after he was divorced from his wife years later.

Multiple sources have indicated that several string sub positions were reserved for women who would sleep with him. One musician expressed shock at the lewd comments he made about her breasts when she was a student. Another obtained a restraining order against him. He reportedly took steps to ensure that his girlfriend, who later became

← Laurie Sokoloff



against him. He reportedly took steps to ensure that his girlfriend, who later became his wife, could perform in the orchestra without submitting to the usual audition process. I have read that at least two orchestra personnel managers were unhappy about this flagrant nepotism, which went unchallenged by the orchestra's management or Board of Directors at the time.

As reported recently in The Baltimore Banner, board member Stephen Shawe admitted that Mr. Carney "is not a choir boy" and claimed to have reprimanded him for his behavior. As a lawyer who represents the BSO in EEOC cases and who also sits on the board's Executive Committee, Shawe seems to be wearing several hats in this matter and would not appear to be the right person to handle any effort to discipline Mr. Carney for his behavior.

As it turns out, Mr. Carney's prominent role at the orchestra cannot even be justified by any special talent for playing the violin. Through

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← Laurie Sokoloff



an acquaintance, I obtained recent recordings of Mr. Carney's playing. He was literally unable to perform Vivaldi's Winter, and his rendition of the Bruch violin concerto was executed at a mediocre student level. I have performed both of these works in concert hundreds of times. He clearly lacks the qualifications for his position.

So why has the BSO allowed him to retire rather than dismissing him for cause, and why is the orchestra honoring him with a laureate position? He has an established record as an untruthful sexual predator and workplace tyrant. To top it off, he can't play the violin at the level required of a concertmaster.

Would you be willing to offer the public an explanation of your reasoning for why Mr. Carney is receiving such generous treatment from your organization? It does seem incongruous with the orchestra's stated values to laud this man as he departs.

← Laurie Sokoloff



I strongly urge you to initiate a new investigation into Mr. Carney's behavior conducted by an impartial expert in the field (such as the team at Cozen O'Connor in Philadelphia, which investigated what we now know to be widespread sexual abuse at the Curtis Institute of Music), make the results of that investigation public and dismiss Mr. Carney for cause.

I would be grateful for your response.

Regards,

Lara St. John

cc: Barry F. Rosen, Chair, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra at brosen@gfriaw.com



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